

## **VIDEOTAPE TRANSCRIPTION**

**Hello. It is October 26 around 10:00 a.m. My name is Crystal Fu and I'm here in the Rare Book Room of the University of Pennsylvania Law Library to interview Professor Chang-Muy on behalf of the Oral Legal Project.**

**Professor Chang-Muy, I'd like to begin with some questions about your childhood and personal life.**

**When and where were you born?**

I was born in Havana, Cuba in 1955.

**Did you grow up there?**

Sort of. My father emigrated from China to Cuba in 1949 when Mao [Tse Dong] took over China. He was almost going to come to the U.S., but the immigration laws at the time did not allow Chinese to come to the U.S. So he came to Cuba, which had open-door, more or less open-door policy. There he met my mother, who is half-Chinese and half-Spanish--her father is from China and her mother is from Spain. So they got together, they married, and I was born--I think in that order. And so we left Cuba in 1960 when Fidel [Castro] took over. So my father, I guess you could say, is a two-time refugee. From China to Cuba and from Cuba to the U.S.

**And then where did you move to after you relocated to the U.S.?**

We went like thousands of other, millions of other Cubans--we went directly to Miami, Florida. And we entered as visitors, actually... as non-immigrant, short-term visitors, pretending to come here for a little while and then we became illegal...our visa expired and then we couldn't go back.

**And how did you gain permanent resident status after that?**

You should take my course. There's a...Congress passed a law in 1964, which is called the Cuban Adjustment Act. And it's sort of a way of the Congress, the government saying all of you Cubans who have fled Castro, we don't like Castro, welcome, we're going to give you green cards and we're going to adjust your status to that of lawful permanent resident. And so we arrived in 1960 as visitors for 3 or 6 months, our visas expired...We became undocumented until 1964 when Congress passed the law, and we all legalized and became

lawful permanent residents. And although my father was in Cuba only for 10 years, from [19]49 to 59 or 60, he was able to take advantage of that law.

**What do your parents do?**

My father used to work for the People's Republic of China, the Guomindang [government]. And he...well [when]he was young... and in fact, he worked for the Guomindang in Cuba. And then when communism took over, he left and came to Miami. And he was the representative for the southern region of the Guomindang—[under the leadership of] Chiang Kai-Shek, in the South. He speaks Spanish, so he was able to help with people who had questions about how to do business with Taiwan, etc. So that was what my father did until recently when he retired. And my mother, like all good Cuban women, was not allowed to go to school...or didn't or she just went to school until the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, which was mandatory schooling, so she's a housewife. So she works inside the home, not getting paid.

**It was very interesting what you were commenting about your father. It seems like no matter where he went he couldn't get away from communism. Let's go on to your siblings. Do you have any and what do they do?**

Sure. My father was married in China to a woman and from that marriage he had three children: Sister One, Sister Two, and Brother Number One. And he left them and when he went to China ...or when he left China and went to Cuba...and he married my mother, and from that relationship is myself and my younger brother. So he got a divorce from Wife Number One, Mother Number One as I call her, and then we all came to the United States. And then in the Seventies, he sponsored his children and then when his children came over--if you recall immigration law--the children were able to sponsor their mother. So we all lived happily in Miami. And at Chinese banquets and ceremonies, my father sits with Wife Number One on his left and Wife Number Two on his right. It recalls old Chinese customs of when men had several wives. Sister Number One died of cancer when I just started law school. So now it's just my older sister and my older brother and my younger brother.

**So did you live in Miami until you attended college?**

That's right, yep. I went to Catholic elementary school, Catholic high school, and then I went away to college, Catholic college. And then I got my Masters from another Catholic university. And my siblings stayed behind. By the way, my elder sister arrived from China with her three younger...children, my nephews, the youngest of her children was about nine when he arrived in the U.S. He's now about 30, 29 or 28[years of age]. He makes more money than any of us, which is interesting. He works for the Bank of America. I understand he makes about three- or four-hundred thousand [dollars] a year. He came as a Chinese immigrant, and his office was in the World Trade Center--it had just moved there a week before September 11<sup>th</sup>--and he's all right. But just in the context of what just happened over a month ago or so, I was personally affected, and I'm glad to hear that nothing happened to him. But he, that particular child, my nephew, is a success story, I guess, in terms of economics.



**What was your childhood like and within what historical context would you place your childhood?**

Well, I remember the Beatles. So, my childhood was in the Sixties and Seventies. I remember the first time I thought in English. It was in first grade. The first time...when I went to first-grade here in America I didn't understand what was going on. And then I remember six or seven months later I told my mother, "I thought in English--I'm starting to think in English." So that's...My childhood, was one, as I recall, was serving as interpreter for my parents and being the bridge between them and society. My father spoke...speaks Chinese and very bad Spanish. My mother speaks Spanish and very bad Chinese, and neither of them speaks English because they settled in Miami, where there's no need to speak English. And so since I learned to speak English from a very early age I was their interpreter. So I remember...I have memories of being interpreter at the doctor, the interpreter at the immigration service, the interpreter with the licensing department, filling out forms, reading letters they would get, and so that...those are some of the memories I have in growing up in the Sixties.

The historical context...there...well, there was a lot of well...In high school there was the Vietnam War, and I was just a bit too young to be drafted. But I remember the Vietnam War...I remember Nixon...I remember Watergate...I remember the Beatles...I remember music. Certain songs come back remind me of girlfriends I had in elementary school and high school...Junior and Senior Prom. So that's...those are some of the memories that come back of the Sixties and Seventies.

**You mentioned girlfriends in elementary school. But...you...**

Where are they?

**Exactly. How has your sexual orientation played a significant role in molding and shaping your values and principles?**

Well yeah. Like all good boys, and all good Chinese boys, there was immense pressure to get married and to have male children who would pass on the last name. That did not happen with me, of course. Not of course...But that didn't happen with me because I grew older and actually as I went away to college--and maybe because college is a time for young people who are away from their parents and who are alone to explore, to reflect on themselves--to discover that I was gay. And so I said goodbye to my girlfriends. And I got...started a serious relationship at twenty-seven [years of age] with someone who is still my domestic partner and we're still together after twenty years or so. We adopted a child who is now nine years old. But I would say to answer your question about how sexual orientation influences you, I think that being on the margins...being on the margins both as a racial minority, as a

sexual minority, forces one, or at least forced me to analyze how society treats its people who are on the margins. So I guess I would have loved to have gone into real estate or corporate law and make easy money with no sweat. Maybe corporate lawyers would disagree with me, but I think that being on the margins and seeing the challenges that people on the margins face, whether you're African-American, Latino, Asian, gay, lesbian, transsexual, transgendered...I think it gave me an understanding of some of the challenges people face legally as well as socially. And I'm sure, that maybe subconsciously, it influenced my decision to go into public interest law. The specific topic that I picked was not civil rights, sexual minority law, but immigrants' rights law, which is the community where I come from, and where I feel most close to, and I deeply understand the challenges of immigrants and refugees.

**Have you ever felt as if you had to compromise one or other of your identities ? For example, your sexual orientation for your ethnic identity? Or your immigrant identity?**

Yeah. Let me answer in a couple ways. Like I said I think I've been ghettoized, and I sort of resent that, but it happened--what I mean by that, growing up and seeing and having to interpret for my parents, against the immigration service or having to help aunts and uncles with immigration authorities. When I grew up and went to law school and took classes, I felt that I had to take immigration law so I could better understand what was happening to my family. So in that sense, I feel I've been compromised. I often wonder what would it be like to do corporate law, to do tax law, to help someone buy a grocery store, or help someone buy a house. Simple stuff, but instead, I feel like I've been forced to do immigration law and sometimes I resent it, but it's too late. I mean I'm glad I have that specialty. The other question that you posed, have I had to compromise...ah...sure sometimes I'll be in a group of Asians, in an Asian-American community and I used to feel maybe my sexual orientation was an issue. Or sometimes I'll be in a group or at a meeting of lesbians or gay men who are mostly white, and so I'm very conscious of being Asian American. Or sometimes I'm with Latinos, who are also very patriarchal and a very anti-gay group--I used to wonder how these people would feel knowing that I'm Latino as well and gay...

But as time goes on, you let it go and you do, and I hope that I've matured a bit. There's no compromising. And I've been able to bring the communities together. And the area of AIDS for example, has brought the AIDS activists together, lesbian and gay activists together, immigration activists together, since AIDS is a grounds to exclude you. And I've been able to help in doing advocacy work on the issue of AIDS and immigrants and all of these groups who used to never speak, and still don't speak, but on certain topics alliances have been formed.

**That's good. I'd like to ask you some questions about your education now. You already stated that you went to a Catholic university, and this was after a childhood of Catholic schools, your parents raised you Catholic?**

Um, well, like most people in Cuba, ninety-nine percent of Cuba is Catholic, with a small population of Jewish people who fled to Cuba during World War II. Cuba opened its doors. The U.S. sometimes did, sometimes didn't. And there was a small Chinese population from the 1800s. The Chinese, by the way, went to Cuba as slaves first, as indentured workers



second, and as free immigrants third. So, one reason my father chose Cuba to emigrate to was because there was already a Chinatown--a large Chinatown-- established. There was a newspaper, a porno[graphy] theater, there was [sp] pharmacy stores... there were grocery stores...there was a huge Chinese infrastructure. But anyway, Cuba, because the Spaniards colonized it, was mainly Catholic. So my mother and father...my mother forced my poor father to marry in the Catholic Church...My father was Buddhist. After we arrived in the U.S., they sent wedding albums of their wedding in Cuba--it was a whole big deal: the white dress, the big church, the stained-glass windows. So my father had to convert to Catholicism in order to marry my mother. And so I was baptized and raised Catholic. When we came to the United States, they enrolled me in a parochial Catholic school, Corpus Christi School, run by the Franciscan sisters. And then I went to La Salle High School run by the Brothers of La Salle. And then I went to Loyola University, an undergraduate degree run by the Jesuits at Loyola in New Orleans. And I went for a Masters in literature at Georgetown University.

**What did you major in college and what made you decide to choose Loyola aside from its Catholic affiliation?**

Well, I went to Loyola because they gave me money. And I forget what [else]. And I went to Georgetown because they gave me a scholarship. College--I started majoring in medicine like all good Chinese boys--major in science. But I flunked organic chemistry, and I realized that I really loved reading. Reading...reading and talking about books, just opened up a whole new arena. I mean, growing up in Miami, in a self-enclosed community, I didn't know about Russia, and I didn't know about other worlds, and other ...other...venues and vistas that literature opened up for me. And so I ended up majoring in literature and minoring in education, like I've realized that a lot of lower-income, middle-income people who end up going to college end up majoring in nursing or education, because you're guaranteed a job. I majored in literature because I loved to read and I minored in education because I truly do love to teach. And so thinking in case I graduated with this nonsense degree and can't find a job, maybe this education degree will help me find a job teaching high school. And then I went on to get a masters at Georgetown in literature and then I transferred...got my masters and then I took a year at the University of Miami to try to get a Ph.D. And there I took a course with a Nobel Prizewinner, who subsequently died. But anyway, I did all the coursework and then I submitted a proposal for my Ph.D. It was three approaches to literature: How to teach literature from a feminist perspective, a Marxist perspective, and lesbian and gay perspective. The committee, the Ph.D., committee thought that it was too nuts-and- bolts and not theoretical or esoteric enough. So I said screw you, I'm going to sue you. And that's when I said maybe I should go to law school to find out how to sue these people who won't let me write my dissertation. That was really stupid because if I was really smart I would have just seen a lawyer, who would probably have told me that I have no grounds to sue. I mean, I can't think of any grounds. It wasn't a tort. It wasn't really a breach of contract. It's...I don't know what it was, but I don't think it's a legal issue. But anyway, that's how I got stuck in going to law school. And that's one reason I went to law school. Another reason I went to law school was because while I was getting my doctorate, my close friend whom I loved very much in college was getting his masters at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. And so I thought well maybe while he does his thing, I'll do my thing, and then maybe we'll end up together and live happily ever after. He did his



thing and we didn't end up [living] happily ever after. But I was trying to go to school just to bide my time for him to finish. And he did finish, but then we went our separate ways. We're still good friends. Anyway, so that was just another stupid reason I went to law school, just to wait for someone else to finish his schooling. While in law school I then took courses in immigration law and I did an internship at the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil rights division, special litigation section. And that's where...and the first day of my internship on January 27<sup>th</sup>, I was assigned to this lawyer to work. And he was very nice to me and his brother went to the same law school [as myself]. And I thought he was very fraternal with me, very nice, treated me like a younger brother. He was a staff attorney with the US Department of Justice, he was an attorney for the United States government. After I finished my internship, that relationship later developed into a romantic relationship and that's who my partner is now, Len. When ...I forget who took over the government, when the Republicans took over the government in 1982--I forget who became president in 1982-- we both left Washington D.C. and I had graduated from law school by that time. And we came to Philadelphia. I came on a fellowship that was administered by Congress to Howard University called the Reginald Heber Smith fellowship program, "The Reggies," and it was funds it had paid...Congress gave money to Howard University. Howard University Law School picked recent law school graduates to do civil rights work and paid their salaries and placed them in legal services. Len came down and worked...and ended up as a co-director of one of fifteen public-interest law firms here in Philly, and it's the Education Law Center. That public-interest law firm represents kids in public schools when public schools screw them--under...using federal, state, and city laws to protect the rights of kids in public schools.

**Going back to education, what was it like to attend a southern university in the Seventies as a marginalized person?**

You know, I really didn't think about that. I guess one way to look at that was that I was totally oblivious to my identity. The other way to look at it is that I was so secure in my identity as an Asian-American and Latino that it didn't matter that I was in a predominantly white, racist city. And New Orleans is certainly white and racist. In fact, for Mardis Gras, the African-American community and the Jewish community leave because Mardis Gras is a very Catholic celebration. Of course, the sexual identity part, I guess for most young people--I just speak for myself--is an issue...is your coming out, is your discovering your sexuality. That was an issue and flaunting love with someone else and not having any role models in the Seventies...There weren't any gay and lesbian couples on campus much less at a Catholic school. So that was an issue, but I had such a good friend that we lived out own little lives--I guess covert lives. But you make do the best you can. People in the margins always do the best they can. I recall going to Singapore, which is an extremely dictatorial city, and I was being given a tour by a friend of mine who's a sociologist. And sociologists are always looking at things as observers. And we were at an outdoor market. And he says,

You see that table over there? Those are policemen. And you see that table over there? Those are gay people, but no one knows they're gay people--only we who are in the know, know those are gay people. So you know gay people here in Singapore, we have our own secret groups and secret societies, because people would be put in jail otherwise.



So I guess similar with going to college in the Seventies at Loyola [University], you don't go to the prom with your male date, or your female date if you're lesbian, but you have your friendships and you be [sp] as quiet as you can. But as to the racial identity parts, I didn't see that as a problem, an issue. There were other Asian-Americans. There were no Asian-American groups. You know, again during the Sixties and Seventies, I think the groups that took the lead were the women's groups and the African-American groups. The women's groups formed groups, support groups. The African-American groups formed support groups, the black student union. Asian-Americans were so small in numbers and the Latinos were so small in numbers, and lesbians and gays--you just couldn't come out--that it wouldn't even have dawned upon us [lesbians and gays] to get together or much less to get funding from student council or anything like that.

**Did you ever feel ostracized because of your sexual identity while in University?**

Not ostracized, but it [sexual identity] was something you just didn't talk about. So certainly if I would've said, 'I'm gay,' I would have lost all my friends. But luckily, I had one good friend who later on...we're still best friends. He's the one who later went to the Kennedy school. But we were support for one another. So those kind of friendships were the ones that kept me going.

**Did you have any professors who were mentors for you?**

Sure my literature department teachers were mentors in the sense that they were as passionate about books and about literature as I...Or they made me become passionate about literature. I still recall them as ones who opened new worlds for me. They were mentors in that sense. They weren't mentors in the sense that I could go to them and talk to them about my personal life. Or you know, [say to them] 'I'm an immigrant and my parents don't speak English, and when you send letters home they don't know understand what the hell you're writing. Or we're waiting for my brother and sister to come from Hong Kong and we've been waiting 5 years.' They weren't those kind of personal problem mentors. But they were mentors in that they helped me understand literature and they excited me so about literature that I decided to go on for a masters and Ph.D. and for that I'm eternally grateful.

**You already told us why you decided to go to law school. Now you went to Antioch...**

Antioch School of Law...

**Where is that and why made you decide to pick Antioch in particular?**

That is no longer a school. Antioch...There's Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio--that's the mother campus. And they [sp] had a law school in Washington D.C. started by Jean and Edgar Kahn, who were incredible activists. And Jean and Edgar started this law school, which was supposed to be modeled like a legal services law school. In order to graduate, you had to take in-class courses. But [also] in order to graduate, you also had to do half of your time--was supposed to be clinical work. And it operated...it got funding from the legal services corporation in Washington D.C. So it was half internship experience and



half classroom experience. The law school was making money. And the main campus in Yellow Springs, Ohio, asked them to send them some of that money. Jean and Edgar Kahn said no, this is our money, this is our funding base, we're not going to do that. So it [Antioch School of Law] cut off ties and it got closed. It has since become the University of the District of Columbia School of Law. But the UDC School of Law is still in principle and in practice the same as Antioch School of Law, in that it functions sort of as a public interest law school where students can get actual practical experience on [sp] law. And the reason I decided to go there was because I wanted to learn how to sue somebody. I wanted to learn how to write a complaint, how to sue, what are grounds for suing...because I wanted to sue the University of Miami English Department for not letting me pursue my doctoral thesis, which I later wanted to turn into a how-to book for high school teachers. And I wanted the thesis to have to kill two birds with one stone...be my thesis and then market it and turn it into a little manual for high school teachers in case they wanted to teach Hemingway from a feminist perspective or from a Marxist perspective, or from a lesbian and gay perspective. So that's why I chose Antioch School of Law.

**So how soon into law school did you realize you didn't have a case and that you were going to have to do something else with your law degree?**

My third year. It was horrible. I thought, 'I may as well stay here.' I also had a really good group of friends, and for law school students, I mean that's what really keeps you going, a good group of support, friends. Five of us ended up living together in a house. Two of us ended up getting married to each other. One of them is a partner at Montgomery McCracken and he ran for governor of Pennsylvania and lost. And Jim Eisenhower, I'm happy to say...that I'm still friends with him and his wife--and she's an advocate for the elderly, and they're [Eisenhower and wife] here in Philly. Another one of us is in New York City, another one of us is in California. We're all still very good friends. And we all kept each other going. Living together in this group home in Washington D.C....had great times, studied together...all different walks of life, different sexual orientations, different ethnicities. Nora is Catholic, Jim is Catholic. And Ned is Catholic-Italian. Peter is African-American. Myself. But we all lived together. We had a great time. And they kept me going. But unfortunately, it was only until the second or third year that I realized, 'You know, now I've taken torts, now I've taken contracts, I've taken criminal law...This is not a criminal law matter. But I might as well finish this through.' And a law degree's served me well. It's been very useful in helping me help the communities that I'm interested in, immigrants and refugees. You know, having a law degree, employers tend to think that you're smart and that you know how to do things. And so a law degree--it was difficult going to law school coming from an English major background, and having to switch gears and having to learn a new language and a new way of thinking...a very outlined way of thinking, it was really hard. But it's served me well in helping other people.

**What was the transition like going from a Jesuit University in New Orleans to a progressive law school in Washington D.C.?**

Jesuits are a schizophrenic bunch. I remember when I was about to finish my bachelor's in Loyola, I was going to do an internship in France with a community of people of adults who



are retarded. It was started by this community of mentally-retarded people, by the son of the prime minister of Canada, Jean Vanier. And he called this community l'auche, which means the ark, and other communities have sprung up all over the world. Anyway, I told this Jesuit priest friend of mine, I'm going to France in a month to work in a group home of mentally-retarded people. He said, 'Oh great, you'll have such a great cultural experience. You'll visit lots of museums, and lots of beautiful cathedrals.' And he was focusing on the cultural and food and wine aspect of France. I told this other Jesuit friend of mine, 'You know I'm going to the arch, the ark, to work with adults who are mentally retarded.' And he says, 'Oh what a wonderful public service you're doing and hopefully you'll grow spiritually and hopefully you'll grow mentally, and mature.' And so he was focusing on the spiritual, more intellectual side. So going to school at Loyola and going to school at Georgetown, you have very progressive Jesuits and you have very conservative Jesuits. So you know those progressive Jesuits who mentored me and who helped me--helped me in my transition to go to law school. And also you know, although I majored in English, and although the way of talking about a poem or a story or novel is different from going to law school, the skills you learn from interpreting and in bullshitting--you know because I can say this poem means this and you can say that poem means that--it's the same thing with interpreting a statute. I can say this statute means this and you can say, no, this statute means that. And that's what judges do, they interpret statutes and regulations in the way that they see fit. So it's not a science, it's an art of bullshitting, you know, using precedent. So actually, majoring in English, and the skills that I learned in interpreting, and in coming up with arguments as to why this poem means this, helped me in interpreting why this statute means this and this regulation means this...and then coming up with arguments to support my main argument.

**Outside school, what were the transitional issues that you had to deal with, going from New Orleans to D.C.?**

The main transition was leaving my friend, my close friend in New Orleans. But I found another group of close friends [at Antioch School of Law]. And going to a progressive school where there was a women's law group and there was a lesbian women's law group, there was an Asian American students law group, a Latino law [students] group, a lesbian and gay law students group, the good friends that I had, those were great support groups in easing the transition into this whole new world of legal thinking, legal paradigms, the law. So you know, I have to say that I was really lucky to end up at Antioch [School of Law]. I met friends from Georgetown [University School of Law]. I was told that at Georgetown [University], at the law school, people would take books out of the library and hoard them and not put them back on the shelf. And at Antioch [School of Law], the environment, the atmosphere, was totally different. We were all there to help each other. There were older students. One of the students in my class was the winner of the Pulitzer Prize. There were nuns, former nuns and current nuns and people who were nuns who later left the nunhood [sp]. There were people with children, there were young people, people with literature backgrounds, people with political science backgrounds, different kinds of people. And we all helped each other. So I have to say going to that particular progressive law school really made going to law school that much easier.



**Did being in a progressive environment help steer you toward your career in public interest?**

Sure, there was an immigration law course. He [The professor] was only part-time, but there was an immigration clinic, which was a clinic, a part of the law school. Actually, it was an externship, it wasn't a clinic, and that whetted my appetite to going into immigration. It's unfortunate, you know, Antioch [School of Law], for all the good that it had, had just a part-time immigration professor and just a part-time clinic. I have to say that I'm proud and privileged to serve as an adjunct [professor] here at Penn [University of Pennsylvania] law [school], teaching immigration law. But I wish that it was offered more on a permanent basis. And the way to offer...and true, I've been teaching here for seven years, but only as an adjunct. And sometimes I wish that the law school would make more of a commitment to certain topic areas, by for example, by hiring full-time professors. And I'm not saying this as self-serving--that I wish the law school would hire me-- I have another career outside of teaching here and that's where I make my money. But it would be nice for students from a pedagogical perspective, it would be nice for students to be able to go to an immigration or human rights or refugee law professor and talk about career choices, or issues of law. And they currently don't...I mean I keep my virtual door open. I always tell my law school students, 'If you have a question, send me an email or put it on the list serve, and we can all learn from your questions,' and I'm always available for meetings before class and after class. But it would be nice to have a full-time presence here to teach immigration law, not only from a student perspective-- and I know that students are our main issue--but also from a substantive area, because the demographics, the census has shown that the demographics of the United States are changing. First of all, we are all a nation of immigrants, unless we're Native American. But the census has shown that the largest-growing community in the United States is Latino. And from a legal perspective, we need to understand how...why are the Latinos coming from Mexico, Central America, South America? And from a legal perspective we need to understand that as well...from a sociological perspective. It's also said for the next ten years, the year 2010 to the year 2020, the largest group of immigrants is going to be, based on projections now, will be the Asian-American community. And so also just from a sociological, economics, and legal perspective, it's important to know the changing face of America and how all that's happening. And as of the day that this taping is going on, September 11<sup>th</sup> just happened a month and some days ago, it's important to understand, who are we allowing in? How are we excluding people? How are we deporting people? How are we keeping tabs on people? Today, as of the day of this taping, Congress has signed the Anti-terrorism bill...How are we surveilling [sp] people? Especially people who are immigrants, who are the vulnerable populations in this group? We rounded up and we put into concentration camps, Japanese-Americans...during World War II. We are doing this [discriminating against immigrants of non-European ancestry] right now. Congress just passed a bill, today, when this taping is going on, allowing us to survey, and to go in and to tap phones...to certain groups of people depending on how they look or who we suspect of [being likely to commit terrorist acts]. Those are topics that can be talked about, either in a criminal law class or in an immigration law class. And unfortunately, this law school does not have a full-time commitment to the teaching of immigration law, refugee law or an immigration clinic.



**You just brought up a lot of interesting issues and I'd like to follow up later when we discuss your professional career. And now I'd like to ask you questions about your professional career. We can go into this more. How did you end up at your first job at the Philadelphia Community Legal Services?**

Sure. Well, as I'd mentioned when I graduated from law school in 1982, I applied for a Reginald Heber Smith fellowship, which is originally, which is money that Congress appropriated and gave to Howard University School of Law to implement. And the purpose behind it was to place recent law school graduates committed to civil rights in legal services around the country and to pay for their salaries so that the poor legal services wouldn't have to pay for them[law school graduate salaries]. So applied for it and I was asked to go to Oklahoma. And I guess the review committee which had read my application saw, 'Fernando Chang-Muy. He's Asian. He must speak Asian. There's a Hmong community, "H-m-o-n-g" in Oklahoma. Chang-Muy equals Hmong, Asian. That Asian can speak *that* Asian. Let's send him to Oklahoma.' So they contacted me and they say, 'Congratulations, you [have] been selected for a Reggie, go to Oklahoma to work in the legal services community because there are Hmong refugees there.' First of all, I'd never heard of the Hmong, I didn't even know how to write it [the word 'Hmong'] or how to spell it. And I don't know what [Hmong] that is! 'No,' I said, 'I'm not going to Oklahoma, and I don't speak Hmong. I speak Chinese. So, if you want me to do civil rights and work with a marginalized community, send me to, you know, another large city that has an Asian or Spanish-speaking population, and then I'll do it. Otherwise, I'm not going to accept your fellowship'. So then they reviewed their files and I guess they saw that Philadelphia Community Legal Services needed a lawyer to work with the Latino, mainly Puerto Rican community, and the Asian community, mainly Chinese-speaking community, and they placed me here and I accepted. That's how I ended up working at legal services. And under the Reginald Heber Smith memorandum of understanding, you're supposed to...75% of your work you're supposed to be like a regular staff attorney, but the other 75%[25%] you're supposed to do advocacy, public awareness...to particular communities. So under that portion of my Reggie [public service], I set up a clinic in Chinatown. So on Mondays and Wednesdays, I would go out there and just sit there, in a store-front non-profit office. And we did marketing and outreach brochures to let people know that on Mondays at 3 p.m. some lawyer's going to be here and you can walk into Chinatown...you don't have to walk down to South Philly or Center City, and you can talk about any legal problem you have. I used bilingual interpreters from community college, bilingual interpreters from Penn and from Temple, to do some of the staffing and some of the intake. And that is also how Penn first started getting into the immigration business. There was a full-time professor here, Gerry Neuman, who has since gone onto Columbia University, and he actually taught an immigration course. And his students who took the course were then funneled into Community Legal Services to do practical work in the immigration clinic, understanding that we had set up between Penn and Community Legal Services, in my outreach clinic.

**Is that how you got started being a clinical lecturer here at Penn?**

Exactly. So when Gerry left to go to Columbia for a short time--and then he stayed at Columbia--Penn asked me to teach his course as a part-time instructor and that's been going



on ever since. I took a hiatus from teaching here, though when I went to...so I was a community legal services attorney and a Reginald Heber Smith fellow...then I was offered a job at the Office of the United Nations High Commission(er) of Refugees in Washington D.C. and I went there for 4 years, 3 or 4 years. And then of course I didn't teach here. And I'm not sure who taught immigration law here when I left. And so that was my next career move, I went to work to work with refugees with UN High Commissioner of Refugees in DC. And after that...during my time with the UN High Commissioner of Refugees, I got interested in the issue of AIDS and there were a number of refugees with AIDS from Africa who were refugees, but were not allowed to come in because they were HIV+. That expanded my repertoire and I got a little more interested in the intersection of public health and law. And I developed an expertise in AIDS and immigration. And that allowed me then to ...then I was offered a job at the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO), where I was a their human rights legal officer in Geneva for about a year, working on the very focused issue of AIDS and human rights. And then, by that time we're in the 91's and 92's [1991 and 1992]... I had met my partner in 1982 in Washington D.C. And one of the reasons we met and loved each other was because we both loved children. And [we] had been talking about adopting kids and [had]never gotten around to it. So we said, look, ten years have passed since we've been together--we haven't done anything-- we're getting older, if we're going to do something, let's do something. So I then I quit the WHO, the World Health Organization, came back to the US, and started...just devoted fulltime to being a baby-looker-for-er...and so...because it's really a full-time job, trying to adopt. So I just took about 6 month [leave of] no work, and devoted myself fulltime to being my own advocate to adopting, and finally in 1993, we were able to adopt a child from Texas. And she is now nine-years-old. Her name is Isabel. Yes, she's nine-years-old.

Then I went to work in higher education. Throughout my career at Community Legal Services, at UNHCR, at the World Health Organization, I'd always used interns. It was a mutually useful relationship. The interns could put on their resume that they'd worked at the United Nations and Community Legal Services. And I could use their wonderful skills, their wonderful research skills. And I said, 'I'd always been on the margins of higher ed[ucation], always using students, but never really being in an university environment...let me see what this is all about. So I was invited to serve as assistant dean at Swarthmore [College], which is a small liberal-arts college in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, and I served as dean of students, working with three student groups: the job was written for me—working with the Latino students, the Asian students, and the lesbian-gay bisexual students. And then I also taught a course on international human rights and refugee policy in the department of political science. So that's how I got into higher ed[ucation] administration. And then when I got back, Penn [University of Pennsylvania Law School] asked me would I teach this course that Gerry used to teach, in 1992-93--that's when I started teaching at Penn again-- the course on immigration law. Most recently, the dean asked me to teach a sub-course, which is what I always wanted to teach...I never really wanted to teach immigration law...what I really wanted to teach was refugee law. And finally, for the first time, I started teaching refugee law, this past Spring of the year 2001. But in my immigration [law] course, I always spend a lot of time on refugee law, which is a sub-branch of immigration law. And I take my students to a county prison, about 100 miles away from here. And they get to develop various skills: interviewing skills, intake skills, research skills about what's a refugee, skills



in putting together a legal affidavit, skills in researching what's going on in Mali, Guinea, Liberia, and then we put all that package together and we give that to a non-profit agency. So with that exercise of taking students to jail, I try to accomplish various objectives: getting students to see the law put into practice, we get to help a non-profit agency help people in jail, and most importantly, we get to help people in jail maybe get out of jail through the great work that the students do.

**Professor Chang, when you mentioned earlier when you were talking about your childhood and growing up in an immigrant community in Miami, how you felt marginalized and how you think that compelled you to be interested in issues dealing with immigrants and marginalized communities. Is that what has compelled you to feel that you need to teach these things to people?**

Sure, in part it's also part of the geometric formula impact. I cannot help the 200 detainees in York County Prison, Pennsylvania. But if I can teach 36 students and each student can take a case, we can potentially help 36 people. So I see education as a tool for social change...education as a tool for public awareness, educating people about a certain topic. So...the root cause of my interest in immigration is because I come from that community and there, but for the Grace of God, go I. That Chinese man in jail that you or another student interviewed, that could be my father...who could have arrived on a ...and indeed, we arrived on an okay visa. That visa expired and we could have been hauled off...my father could have been hauled off to jail because his visa expired. In the year 2001, if my father is a little darker and looks a certain way or wears a turban, our house could be put under surveillance and our phones tapped, so there but for the grace of God, go I. So I think I need to do something about the community that I come from. So that's one reason to teach immigration law. It's a community I care about. The second reason is the geometric impact reason. I teach you. You then might go teach others in your corporate law firm or corporation in-house counsel or wherever you end up...you might urge your colleagues to take one or two immigration cases. If you take two, if I take two, if everyone in the class takes two cases, every year of your life from now on, we have the potential of helping immigrants, who are extremely vulnerable. I should say that after I worked at higher ed[ucation], I then made the transition over to working in philanthropy. I work here...living in Pennsylvania, I can't help but be influenced by the Quakers. And the Quakers have a saying, that you know, 'Life is a journey, we're all on a journey' and I guess I'm on a journey to find where I can best make an impact. And I ended up working at a foundation. A foundation is an organization that gives away money. Our tax code allows this to happen. Anyway, in my work in a foundation, I found out that foundations like to give to many population groups. Kids are a very popular group...everybody loves to give to kids. The United Way gives to kids. The Ford Foundation gives to kids. And elderly are also popular...women, abused women are a really popular group. At the bottom of the giving line...lesbian and gay people are the least groups ...Group non-profit agencies that help lesbian and gay people are at the bottom of the receiving money line. And if you can believe it, groups that help migrants, farmworkers, and immigrants, get even less money than lesbian gay groups. So that's even another reason to raise awareness about the challenges of immigrants and refugees so that when you grow up and graduate from law school, maybe you will devote some pro bono time to a non-profit agency like Pennsylvania Immigrant Resource Center or wherever you end up in whatever



state. You will call some non-profit agency that works with immigrants, 'I know you people are underfunded, I know you people have only one staff attorney, can I volunteer the resources of my big, big law firm and help do a case?' So that's yet another reason, to answer your question [as to what compels Chang-Muy to teach immigration law] why I feel that I have a responsibility to teach immigration law and to expose students to some of these challenges that this very vulnerable, non-funded, totally ignored population and non-profit to serve them, face.

**And you mention that you've been teaching immigration law not only at the law school as well as the school of social welfare [work] here at Penn [University of Pennsylvania], how has that been and how do you see the interdisciplinary forces at work?**

Well, first of all, I got invited to teach at the Graduate School of Social Work here at Penn through the former dean of the school, who is Peter Vaughn. Peter Vaughn...and the way I got to know Peter Vaughn is...he was because he was on the board of trustees on the Philadelphia foundation where I worked as a program officer, helping to make grants to worthy non-profits. So Peter was on the board. We met each other when I was an employee there, and he said, 'Would you teach at the graduate school of social work?' And I said, 'Well, what?' And he said, 'How about plain old, you know, Law 101 to raise awareness with social workers about the influence of law in society because they're going to end up working with clients either with elderly clients, abused women, kids, alcoholics, drug addicts--what social workers do. And they need to know how law impacts their clients.' And I said, 'Sure.' So I started teaching a course on the social functions of law at the Graduate School of Social Work about three years ago and I see a big difference. I should say that the Graduate School of Social Work is like the step-child of the University of Pennsylvania system. You go in there...the building is very small, very cramped. It's like walking into a non-profit center. There's [sp] boxes. There's...the offices are very small. There's a very small computing lab. And then you walk into Wharton [Business School], or you walk into the University of Pennsylvania School of Law and it's wonderful technology, wonderful classes, wonderful air-conditioning, wonderful heating, wonderful computers...everything. And you know, maybe that's the way it should be. Social workers should be used to working in...maybe...social workers should be used to working in unfunded rooms and unfunded atmospheres and maybe lawyers who end up working in big law firms...this is where you get your feeling of what it's like to live and work in a privileged and powerful office. It's also a different type of mentality. Here [Penn Law School], it's graded and the students are all very grade-conscious because I suppose, an A+ equals being offered a job by a big law firm which translates to a starting salary of \$117,000. At the Graduate School of Social Work, it's pass/fail. So it's a different atmosphere from both a teacher's perspective and both [sp] from the student's perspective. I have to say I thoroughly enjoy teaching at the Graduate School of Social Work students because they're there...they're there...they know that they're going to end up working after paying all their loans and everything, they know they're going to end up working...earning \$40,000. But they're committed to that. And they know it from the beginning. So it's just a different atmosphere. I have to say though that the students who end up enrolling in my class [in the law school], I also respect and honor them because they don't have to take this course in immigration law. And I would hope that by now that the reputation has spread that the way I



structure my class is from a public interest perspective and I don't spend a lot of time on business visas and labor visas and how to do immigration to make money kind of way. But from... I teach immigration law from a how to help vulnerable groups kind of way and so I'm happy that...I know that the students who enroll in the class are there because they're interested in that [immigration law] and I always say at the first day of class, you know 'This is what we're going to do, you're going to have a test, you're going to have a mid-term, you're going to get up at 6 a.m. on a Saturday in about 6 weeks. We're going to go to jail. We're going to go in a car. So, if you don't like this, get out. And for those who stay, I know that they're committed and they're genuinely interested in doing...in taking this course...being taught from that kind of perspective.

**And you mentioned how you've impacted these students at Penn [University of Pennsylvania] Law. How has Penn Law impacted and influenced your career? And what role has the law school played in shaping your life?**

Well, first of all, I don't know if I've impacted law students. I mean, I teach and everyone knows that. I actually go back to my professors at undergraduate and graduate school...and I haven't been in touch with my law school professors...but I make it a point to tell them how are you doing, I'm doing fine, Thank you for teaching me. A teacher never knows what impact one has on his students and maybe you'll never know until maybe ten years from now some student writes to you and says, 'Hi, I'm working at an immigration law firm. The course that I took with you really influenced me.' So I don't know if I've impacted my students or not. I would hope that I've at least...that the minimum I hope that I've not turned them off to immigration law. The maximum I hope that I've turned them onto doing a [immigration] case once a year in their corporate law firm. The influence that Penn has had on me is it's allowed me to raise awareness about immigration, immigration issues, and for that I'm extremely happy and honored. And grateful to Penn for offering me the opportunity to teach immigration law so that the law students in turn can learn a little bit more about immigration issues, immigrants, refugees, real people and not [solely] about law. Working at the law school and working at Penn generally, has also allowed me to see from a higher ed[ucation] perspective, what also happens in the real world perspective. I just mentioned, lawyers, and this law school in particular, is fairly wealthy. The Graduate School of Social Work, and social workers, tend to be not as wealthy from a salary perspective. And I don't think I would've been actually able to see that if I'd not been working in these two departments and walking across the street from one place to another and just seeing the incredible difference. And then of course I...sometimes I'm invited to give a talk or to...at the Wharton School. And that's yet another totally different environment. And you know, they've got incredible facilities...incredible space. It's, you know, totally...the business world.

**Professor Chang-Muy, I have one final question for you. You've placed this interview within the context of September 11<sup>th</sup> and its aftermath. And I'd like to tie in the experiences you've had as a legal officer with the UN, working in the refugee camps and seeing the immigration issues that war can pose and tying that into September 11<sup>th</sup> with what you feel has been your legacy in a sense in the legal field?**



That's a mouthful, I'm not sure I understand your question. I don't think I've had a legacy. I think...you know you can't teach immigration law, and I have to admit, I can't, I don't do it this way either...you can't teach immigration law without...you should teach...let me put it in the positive...you should teach immigration law but not just talking about what the U.S. does to immigrants, the laws and regulations and place and the cases. You should also talk about the root cause of why people come here. So if we have a Chinese person coming here, with a false passport, getting stopped at JFK [John F. Kennedy] Airport, and then being put in [prison in] York County, Pennsylvania, and then you meet him later...about two years later when you go interview him because that's the assignment that I force you to do in my class, in a good immigration class, and I admit I don't do this, we should talk about the root cause. What causes that Chinese person to leave China with a false passport, spend \$30,000 maybe to a snakehead [person who illegally smuggles people into other countries], to someone to sneak him in. Why? But because this is a law school and not the department of sociology or the department of anthropology, I don't spend a lot of time looking at the root cause. Going to your question, I've made several references to September 11<sup>th</sup> and what's happened. One thing we should talk about is what caused those people to do that? What is it that they perceived the U.S. to be doing in the Middle East, to Afghanistan, to the Taliban, to make them hate the United States so much? What is it that the U.S. really is doing or perceived to be doing that would cause someone to give up their life...in the name of a cause they believe in? So we should talk about the root cause. And now we should talk about what happened after that. And what's happened after that is that all the advances that immigrant advocacy groups have made in raising awareness about immigrants and showing that we're not all poor, we're not all dark, since we're all perceived as dark and poor, and dirty and uneducated—and there's nothing wrong with being dark by the way--those advances have just been erased. Because immigrants, especially dark South Asian immigrants, Arab-looking immigrants, are seen with suspicion...not only seen with suspicion, they're actually harassed and thrown things at or even their businesses are destroyed. So September 11<sup>th</sup> has had an incredible impact on those of us in the advocacy refugee movement...it's had an impact on immigrants, people who want to come here, their visa applications are scrutinized even more carefully, students who want to come here from the Middle East are scrutinized even more carefully. U.S. citizens here, who are of Arab-American background, are scrutinized even more. And again, there, but for the grace of God, go I. What if it had been a Chinese crazy man who set a bomb at the World Trade Center or who had hijacked the plane. I would be walking around...People would be saying is this another Chinese crazy man who's about to set a bomb at the Barnes and Noble when I walk in? So again, there, but for the grace of God go I, and all of us who are not a part of the whiter or whiter [pronouncing 'h' ] community. And so that's why it's all the more important for law schools around the country, not just Penn, but for all law schools to make a commitment to teaching immigration law, to having an immigration clinic, because that's the wave of the future. Also, from a purely economic perspective, and we're detouring a little bit, more and more law students are Latino, more and more law students are Asian-American, whose parents are immigrants. All the more reason to teach immigration law, to have Asian-American, Latino, faculty members, and support staff in the dean's office, because your students, your demographics are changing. So I challenge law schools, and I challenge higher ed[ucation], I challenge universities, law schools, medical schools, graduate departments, to move along



with the changing demographics of their student body. And hire people who can really help their students in the issues that they're facing as they matriculate into the schools.

**Professor Chang-Muy, on behalf of the Oral Legal Project, I'd like to thank you for your time today.**

Thank you for inviting me.